



A Nonpartisan Public Policy and Research Office of the Connecticut General Assembly

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Testimony of
Alyssa Norwood, Project Manager
Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Housing Committee

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Senators Winfield and Osten, Representatives Butler and Rose, and esteemed members of the Housing Committee, my name is Alyssa Norwood, and I am Project Manager for Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. I thank you for this opportunity to comment on several bills before you today regarding the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Procedure (the appeals procedure), codified in Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes.

As you know, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is the non-partisan, public policy and research office of the General Assembly, devoted to preparing Connecticut for a significantly changed demographic and enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For over twenty years, the Legislative Commission on Aging has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities.

**Bills concerning efforts to promote and expand affordable housing
SB 171, HB 5254, HB 5579, HB 6127**

The appeals procedure has spurred the creation of thousands of units of affordable housing since its adoption in 1989. The need for these units in Connecticut is more salient than ever more, where 35% of home owners and 50% of renters spent at least 30% of their household income on housing. For Connecticut residents age 65 years and older, these numbers rise slightly to 40% of home owners and 53% of renters.¹

The need for affordable housing in Connecticut continues to surpass the available supply. Accordingly, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging **supports** efforts to incentivize affordable housing development through creation of a grant program (SB 171) and to increase the number of affordable housing units in developments that arise through the appeals procedure (HB 5254, 5579, and 6127).

¹ US Census, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



Bills concerning prohibiting the conversion of age-restricted housing and incentivizing senior housing: HB 5056, HB 5580, HB 5805, HB 5057, HB 5578, HB 5804, HB 5576, SB 403, HB 6146

Rising housing and health care costs, difficulties reentering the workforce, and diminished opportunities for saving as people live longer—and often with multiple chronic conditions—can create significant economic hardship for Connecticut’s older adults.²

The spirit of these bills—expanding housing opportunities for older adults in Connecticut—is laudable, especially as the aging population grows significantly and we continue to find through our work that older adults overwhelmingly want to age in place, in familiar home and neighborhood environments.

Of equal importance are the housing needs of the myriad of professionals necessary to support older adults and persons with disabilities. This critical workforce may also need affordable housing. Creating more affordable housing for all Connecticut residents is also necessary to create economically vibrant, diverse communities that enhance opportunities for intergenerational connectivity. Accordingly, successful aging in place demands growing Connecticut’s affordable housing for people of all ages.

Policy strategies are most effective when they foster notions of shared fate, across age and other demographic and personal characteristics. According to one recent study, a lifespan approach in communities not only helps foster social capital among diverse populations, but it also increases public will among younger generations to address aging issues.³

Undoubtedly, we all believe, that people of all ages (including our future populations of older adults) deserve a roof over their head and a place to call home.

In short, we embrace opportunities to expand affordable housing options for older adults in Connecticut, those that supplement, not supplant, existing efforts to create more affordable housing opportunities across the lifespan.

**Bills effectively decreasing the 10% affordable housing threshold
HB 5055, HB 5582, HB 5803, HB 6128, HB 6130, HB 6131, HB 6139**

As you are aware, there are several bills before you that would count low-income housing as affordable housing (HB 5055, 5582 and 6130), that would provide credit for existing affordable

² Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging, in partnership with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, is the lead state agency for the national Elder Economic Security Initiative, launched nationally by Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW). To learn more, please see *Elders Living on the Edge: Toward Economic Security for Connecticut’s Older Adults*. Available at: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/coa/PDFs/eesi%20Research%20Brief%20rev%20final%204%207%209.pdf>

³ Corita Brown and Nancy Henkin. Building Communities for All Ages: Lessons Learned from an Intergenerational Community-building Initiative. *Journal of Community & Applied Psychology*. 24: 63-68 (2014).

housing (HB 5803, 6128, and 6139), and at least one that would expressly decrease the 10% threshold to qualify for a moratorium from the appeals procedure (Proposed House Bill 6131). We reiterate that the need for affordable housing in Connecticut is significantly greater than the supply. Accordingly, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging expresses concern with any efforts that would stifle the creation of additional affordable housing units in Connecticut.

Bills to repeal the appeals procedure
HB 5577, HB 6129

The appeals procedure has been a critical tool statewide in overcoming burdensome local barriers to creating affordable housing for residents across the lifespan. Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging opposes such efforts to repeal.